

**5.0 DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION**  
**THOMAS JAMES HOUSE**



## **5.0 DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF THOMAS JAMES HOUSE**

The expanded APE includes one 50-year-old resource: the Thomas James House (CRS No. K-2686), which was previously surveyed in 1980. The property was not evaluated as part of the 1980 survey.

### **5.1 Description**

The Thomas James House (Beers 1868) is located on a 2.10-acre parcel (8-00-11300-02-3300-00001) on the east side of Clapham Road (US 113A), approximately 0.75 mile northwest of Little Heaven. The property consists of a nineteenth-century farmhouse and an early twentieth-century, frame, tool/wood shed. The farmhouse is a *circa*-1850, two-and-one-half-story, side gable front block with a one-and-one-half-story, side gable, *circa*-1820 rear ell extending from the southeast corner. The frame dwelling sits upon a full brick foundation, and aluminum siding covers the exterior walls of the dwelling and features aluminum corner boards. The gable ends of the front block are clad in vertical aluminum siding. The steeply pitched, side gable roof that caps the front block is sheathed in asphalt shingles and features gable end returns. Two interior, brick end chimneys protrude from the roof ridge. The rear ell is capped by a steeply pitched, asphalt shingle-clad, side gable roof. An interior brick end chimney protrudes from the eastern end of the roof ridge.

The dwelling faces west towards Clapham Road. A simple wood entry porch, centrally located on the facade, features brick steps, landing, and simple wood posts. The entry porch replaced a previous wood entry porch with filigreed brackets documented on the 1980 survey form. A carpenter-gothic, wood bench is located on the north and south sides of the porch and spans between the porch posts and facade of the dwelling. Between 1980 and 2007, a pedimented entry porch was added to the secondary entry centrally located on the south elevation of the rear ell. The porch consists of brick steps, landing, and aluminum railing, posts, and balustrade.

The dwelling features six-over-six light, double-hung sash, wood windows on the west and east elevations of the front block. The north and south elevations contain two evenly spaced, four-over-four light, double-hung sash, wood windows in the gables. The south and north elevations of the rear ell contain six-over-six light, double-hung sash, wood windows in the first story. The first story of the rear ell's north elevation features aluminum, replacement windows hung in pairs. The upper story of each elevation features narrow, rectangular, double-hung sash windows, some of which have been replaced. Two evenly spaced, four-over-four light, double-hung sash, wood windows light the gable on the east elevation of the rear ell.

A one-story, frame, *circa*-1930 tool/wood shed, erected in three parts, is located immediately to the east of the dwelling. The building was converted for use as a dog kennel ca. 1965, and a wire mesh fence extends outward from the east elevation of the building. The building sits atop a concrete slab and vertical-board siding, painted white, covers the exterior walls. A steeply pitched, side gable roof, sheathed in asphalt shingles and featuring three separate planes along the ridge, caps the building.

A gravel semi-circular farm lane leads east from Clapham Road to the south side of the dwelling and former tool shed. A line of mature deciduous and evergreen trees delineate the north, south, and east borders of the property. Cultivated fields surround the property line outside the tree line to the south and west, and a post-2000 trailer park is located directly across Clapham Road, immediately to the east of the property.

## **5.2 Historical Narrative**

The property delineated as 628 Clapham Road in South Murderkill Hundred, Kent County, originally encompassed 573 acres that belonged to Thomas James, a local farmer. The one-and-one-half-story dwelling was presumably erected ca. 1820 as the form is common of early nineteenth century dwellings erected in Delaware. It can be assumed that James erected the two-story front block and added the Greek Revival detailing ca. 1850 as his name and dwelling appear on Byles' 1859 Atlas of Kent County, Delaware. The 1868 Beers' Atlas of Kent County, Delaware also illustrates "Thos.

James” as the land owner. Over the next four decades, ownership of the large tract of land presumably passed through heirs of Thomas James, for the title trace is lost until 1901.

On August 6, 1901, Carrie M. Latchum sold the property, known as “The Sipple Tract” along with “all buildings and improvements” to Charles N. Hoodall for \$4,550 (Kent County Deed Book, Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Dover, Delaware [KCDB] N8: 87). Hoodall retained ownership of the land until he lost the property from the settlement of a lawsuit and a debt of \$2,400. On April 29, 1936, William G. Bush, Sheriff of Kent County, sold the 573-acre property to Arley B. Magee, the highest bidder, for \$2,800 (KCDB U14: 314). On January 4, 1937, Magee and his wife, Louise M., conveyed the property to John Dingle (KCDB B15: 43). According to a 1937 aerial photograph of the property, the Thomas James House included the extant dwelling and several agricultural outbuildings, including a barn. A circulation network of farm lanes intersect throughout the property and bisect through a small former orchard located to the northeast of the dwelling.

On December 28, 1950, Neva W. Dingle, widower of John Dingle, sold the property to Island Farm, Inc. (KCDB C19: 369). On July 1, 1962, Island Farm, Inc., conveyed the property, totaling 573 acres, to King Cole Farm, Inc. (KCDB Y22: 302). Over the next year, King Cole Farm, Inc., subdivided the acreage into separate lots. The field patterns and historic agricultural use of the property may have been replaced at this time. The land adjacent to the west side of Clapham Road (US 113A) was subdivided into a residential trailer park. King Cole Farm, Inc., subdivided the Thomas James House and tool shed onto a 2.0-acre tract of land and on November 26, 1963, sold the small parcel, including the dwelling and tool shed, to Arthur E. Pulleyn for \$4,500 (KCDB I23: 532). Prior to 1980, Mr. Pulleyn enclosed the first floor addition on the north elevation of the rear ell, encased the dwelling in aluminum siding, and replaced some of the windows on the rear ell. Between 1980 and 2007, the entry porch on the facade was replaced and a porch was added to the south elevation of the rear ell. Currently, in 2007, Arthur E. Pulleyn retains ownership of the property, which consists of 2.0 acres.

### **5.3 National Register Evaluation**

The property located at 628 Clapham Road was previously documented by Valeria Sesna in October 1980. This documentation identified the dwelling and dog kennel (former tool/wood shed) as extant buildings. This survey identified the property as the “Thos. James House” (Beers 1868). As part of the current effort, the former tool/wood shed was documented using a CRS 3 form and a CRS 10 form documenting the current conditions of the property was also prepared (Appendix A).

The Thomas James House embodies elements of a mid-nineteenth-century dwelling with Greek Revival detailing, including symmetrical facade, paneled door with transom, corner boards, and gable end returns. It retains integrity from its initial period of construction (ca. 1820) and *circa*-1850 addition. Therefore, the property is recommended eligible under National Register Criterion C.

The Thomas James House retains the majority of the aspects of integrity enabling it to convey its architectural significance. Integrity of design is most critical when evaluating individual resources as representative examples of a type under Criterion C. The reconstruction of the front porch and small scale additions to the rear ell do not compromise the integrity of design of the dwelling as it retains its L-shaped footprint, fenestration pattern, massing, chimneys, and roofline.

The material integrity of the dwelling has been somewhat compromised by the cladding of the roof in asphalt shingles, the encasement of the exterior in aluminum siding, and the replacement of some doors and windows. However, the Thomas James House retains most of those physical elements of construction including brick foundation, brick chimneys, majority of original windows with wooden sills, paneled entrance door, and transom. Integrity of workmanship is evident in the brick foundation, chimneys, entry benches, and wood sills. Based on an examination of historic aerials and mapping, the dwelling appears to retain integrity of location, as it is located adjacent to the roadway and gravel farm lane. The integrity of setting has been somewhat compromised by the

loss of the relationship between this and the buildings that once comprised the farm complex, although it still retains a setting among active agricultural lands adjacent to a gravel lane. The association of the former dwelling with a farmstead complex has been lost by the removal of the agrarian structures; however, the dwelling continues to serve a residential use. The retention of integrity of materials, workmanship, design, and location result in the retention of integrity of feeling. Thus, the Thomas James House retains sufficient integrity to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register in the area of architecture.

The Thomas James House is not eligible under Criteria A and C in the area of agriculture due to loss of integrity. In order to be seen as a significant example of a farm complex, a resource must possess features that date to and retain integrity from the period of agricultural significance. The tax parcel that currently comprises the Thomas James House consists of a small 2.10-acre lot that includes the dwelling and former tool shed, accessed by a gravel farm lane, and interspersed with and surrounded by large mature evergreen and deciduous trees. With the exception of the single, semicircular, gravel lane, none of the former circulation paths, former pasture areas, and field patterns shown on the 1932 aerial remains.

The integrity of design, feeling, and association of the farm complex has been altered by the removal of the barn, formerly located to the northwest of the dwelling. No agricultural outbuildings remain to convey the types of farming conducted on the property; their loss detracts from the overall integrity of feeling, association, and design of the property as a farm complex. The Thomas James property only retains a former tool/wood shed.

The former farmstead no longer retains an identifiable plan or arrangement of buildings and structures; the integrity of design and setting of the farm complex has been compromised by the loss of former outbuildings and circulation paths evident in the 1932 aerials. Finally, the property does not retain sufficient feeling of a farm to be eligible under Criterion A. The Thomas James property does retain a farmhouse but does not

retain the feeling of a farm complex due to the loss of historic outbuildings and landscape features (field patterns, orchards, and gardens) and the introduction of modern development adjacent to the property.

Under National Register Criterion B, the Thomas James House is not eligible due to a lack of association with a significant individual. Thomas James, who appears to have erected the dwelling in the mid-nineteenth century, is known to have held a large amount of land in the area. However, based on an examination of primary and secondary sources, it does not appear that Thomas James carried out any activities that were demonstrably important to the local area.

The Thomas James House is not eligible under Criterion D (potential to yield information important to prehistory or history). Eligibility of above-ground resources under Criterion D is rare; to be eligible under Criterion D, a building must possess the potential to yield information on practices or methods of construction. The Thomas James House is built of frame, a common construction technique in the area, and does not appear to have the potential to be an important source of information. As no archaeological testing has been conducted on the Thomas James property, the property's archaeological potential cannot be assessed at this time.



**Photograph 5:** K-2686, Thomas James House: West elevation, view to northeast. Note original windows and replacement porch (September 2007).



**Photograph 6:** K-2686, Thomas James House: North and west elevations, view to southeast. Note gable-end returns and corner boards associated with the Greek Revival style (September 2007).





**Photograph 7:** K-2686, Thomas James House: South elevation, view to north. Note retention of massing (September 2007).



**Photograph 8:** K-2686, Thomas James House: South elevation of rear ell, view to north. Note replacement windows in upper half story and replacement porch (September 2007).



**Photograph 9:** K-2686, Thomas James House: North and east elevations, view to southeast (September 2007).



**Photograph 10:** K-2686, Thomas James House: Former tool/wood shed, south elevation, view to north (September 2007).